



News from

Congressman Ron Kind

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S THIRD
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

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\$1.5 Billion for VA Health Care a Long-Delayed Victory for Wisconsin Veterans

Kind, House Vote to Fully Fund Veterans' Health Care

Washington, DC – After continuous calls from U.S. Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI) and other members of Congress to honor America's pledge to its veterans, both chambers of Congress voted last evening to correct the \$1.5 billion shortfall in veterans' health care funding- a shortfall that was belatedly acknowledged by the Bush Administration in June and only partially fixed by the House earlier this month.

In June, the Bush Administration reported that it was short \$1.5 billion for covering current needs at the Department of Veterans Affairs this year, despite earlier attempts by Rep. Kind and others members of the Budget Committee sought to increase VA funding in this year's budget. In response, the Senate voted unanimously to give the VA an extra \$1.5 billion to cover the shortfall. The House then voted to approve just \$975 million, still leaving a substantial hole in the VA budget. Last night, the House approved the full \$1.5 billion as a part of a larger spending measure for the Department of Interior.

"I am pleased that Congress has finally taken the necessary action to redress the shortfall in veterans' health care funding, but this mistake could have been avoided if the Administration had only listened to those of us in Congress who have consistently pushed for more VA funding," said Rep. Kind. "Even when the Administration acknowledged that there was not enough money, the House dragged its feet in moving to correct the problem. The fact that this shortfall in critical veterans' funding occurred in the first place and that it took so long to fix is a real disgrace."

During the budget process, Rep. Kind fought to increase support for veterans' health care and supported several earlier attempts to fix the VA shortfall which were blocked in the House. [HR 3010, Vote #320, 6/24/05. Failed 185-216 HR 3057, Vote # 325, 6/28/05. Failed 217-189]. Kind also joined 200 other members in a letter to President Bush on urging the Administration to support emergency funding of VA health benefits.